



Frank Madla

Texas State Senate
District 19

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January 8, 2004

#E1-469
RGA

Mr. John W. Johnson, Commission
Mr. Robert Nichols, Member
Mr. Ric Williamson, Member
Texas Transportation Commission
Dewitt C. Greer State Highway Building
125 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2483

FD 34284

Dear Commissioner and Members:

It is my understanding that at your public meeting on December 18, 2003 you moved to take no action on agenda item 10f(1) regarding the construction of an at-grade railroad crossing on FM 2676 in Medina County. As expressed to you at the meeting, there is local concern regarding the proposed crossing, and while those concerned appreciate you not taking any action at this time, they remain concerned about the effects such a crossing could have on the safety of the local residents and those traveling on FM 2676.

I have included for your reference two letters from Medina County Judge Jim Barden recommending grade separation crossings, in addition to a letter from James Randall, Director, Texas Department of Transportation, Planning and Programming, also recommending a grade separation crossing to eliminate all highway-rail grade crossing conflicts. I believe these letters will assist you as you further consider the above mentioned proposal.

I respectfully request that before any decisions are made, you take all necessary steps, including on-site studies, to ensure that constructing such a crossing would be in the best interest of the citizens of Medina County and the traveling public. I also request that those who appeared before you on December 18th, as well as Judge Barden and myself, be made aware of any advancements regarding this proposal.

I appreciate your consideration of my request. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact myself or Jason Anderson on my staff.

Yours truly,

Frank Madla

FM/ja

cc: The Honorable Jim Barden, Medina County Judge
Mr. Michael W. Behrens, P.E., Executive Director, Texas Department of Transportation
Ms. Victoria Rutson, Chief Secretary of Environmental Analysis, Surface Transportation Board
Dr. Robert T. Fitzgerald, President, The Medina County Environmental Action Association

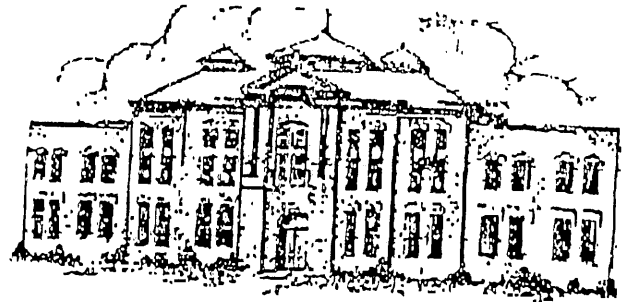


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PAGE 25

Jim Barden

1100 16th Street
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Hondo, Texas 78861

(830) 741-6021 Fax (830) 741-6025



April 24, 2003

COPY

Ms. Jaya Zyman-Ponebshek
URS Corporation
P.O. Box 201088
Austin, Texas 78720-1088

Re: TB Finance Docket No. 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad
Company-Construction and Operation Exemption-Medina
County, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above matter. As you can imagine it is a subject of some concern and controversy among the citizens who live in or near the affected area.

Before outlining the county's concerns regarding the project, I want to correct a few misimpressions in the Synopsis attached to the STB letter of March 31, 2003. First, Medina County has a population of 40,000 persons rather than 33,000 as stated in the Synopsis. This number is increasing dramatically as developers are opening subdivisions in the eastern half of the county to accommodate San Antonio's growth. By the time any such rail line be put in operation, I expect the population will have grown by another 10% or more with most of it in the eastern part of the county where the quarry and railroad are proposed.

Second, while the roads to be crossed are lightly traveled when compared to urban interstates, they do carry a significant amount of traffic and are major east/west routes for our county citizens.

Third, the synopsis states that the proposed line traverses only two drainage features with intermittent seasonal flow (Quihi and Elm Creek). Substitute the word "flood" for "flow" and a more accurate picture emerges. Placing a rail line across these areas without significant length of open bridges or trestles will exacerbate our almost annual flooding problems.

Having said the above, the county governments concerns regarding the proposed rail line center on two areas. If the rail line is built we want to see the safest possible road crossings and the least intrusive creek, draw and slough crossings. Several years ago when this project was first announced the proposed quarry owners represented to the Precinct

Commissioner that there would be elevated road or RR crossings on FM 2676 and CR 4516. Now we understand they are only proposing grade crossings. With at least 4 trains per day at 100 cars for at least 250 days each year this presents a major safety concern and traffic flow impediment. I urge serious consideration of having elevated roadway crossings at these two major arteries in Medina County.

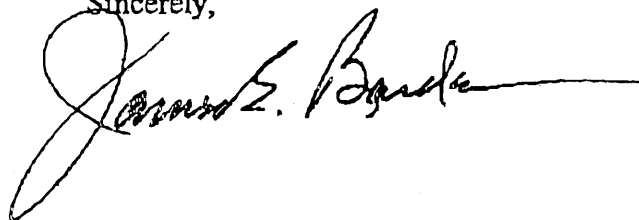
The other concern (water flow and flooding) is equally great. The history of this area is not one of gently flowing streams that rise with a big rain. Rather it is a history of flash flooding that can inundate large areas of land in a matter of minutes and hours. Any structure placed across these flood areas is a problem. I hope that sufficient construction requirements will be imposed to alleviate this problem as much as possible.

Regarding which of the four proposed routes is preferable, there appears to be little difference as far as our concerns of traffic safety and movement and flooding are concerned... or at least none of that can be discerned without expensive further study.

The individual citizens in the area have substantial and additional concerns which should be heard. The issues outlined above (traffic safety and flooding) are the principal concerns of the county government.

Again, thank you for the chance to have our views heard. I will be glad to visit further with you if you wish.

Sincerely,



JEB/jaa

Jim Barden

1100 16th Street
Room 101
Hondo, Texas 78861

(830) 741-6021 Fax (830) 741-6025



December 17, 2003

Texas Department of Transportation
Austin, Texas

Sirs:

This relates to the proposed grade level crossing of FM 2676 in Medina County by Southwest Gulf Railroad.

FM 2676 has too often been described as an out-of-the-way country road with little in the way of traffic. In fact FM 2676 is one of the best FM roads in the State. It is a major artery in what is becoming one of the fast growing areas of our State. While FM 2676 has not reached a level of congestion that requires a grade separation to ease the threat of traffic jams, its need for a grade separation is primarily a safety concern.

Traffic in the area of the proposed crossing is moving at a relatively high speed because there is no reason to stop or slow down for a few miles in either direction. To suddenly come upon a grade crossing in an east/west stretch of fast moving highway is highly dangerous situation regardless of the warnings and cross-arms.

The owners of the proposed railroad acknowledged the need for a grade-separations crossing at this location in early discussions with the local TXDOT Engineer and some community leaders and Elected Officials. If they are now proposing otherwise, it is essential to understand what has changed. It certainly is not the amount of traffic which has continued to increase or the projected use of the railroad crossing which has not changed.

I urge your serious consideration and on-site study of the location by your engineers familiar with the area. I believe a grade-separation crossing at this location is a must for the best interests of the citizens of Medina County and the traveling public.

Thank your for the opportunity to express my views.

Sincerely,

JEB/jaa



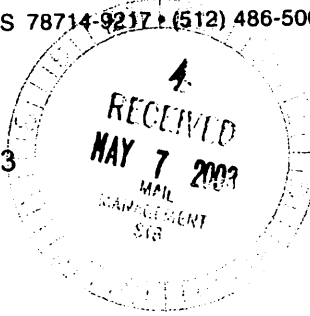
Texas Department of Transportation

P O BOX 149217 • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78714-9217 • (512) 486-5000

#E1-63

RQJ

April 30, 2003



FILE: TPP (M)
(512) 416-2349

Ms. Jaya Zyman-Ponebshek
URS Corporation
P.O. Box 201088
Austin, Texas 78720-1088

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad Company –
Construction and Operation Exemption – Medina County, Texas

Dear Ms. Zyman-Poneshek:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has reviewed the documents supplied by the Surface Transportation Board (STB), in relation to STB Finance Docket No. 34284. Southwest Gulf Railroad Company (SGR) has filed a petition for exemption from certain requirements of 49 U.S.C 10901 in this docket, and seeks authority to construct approximately seven miles of railroad track in Medina County, Texas. TxDOT offers the following comments and information in regards to that application.

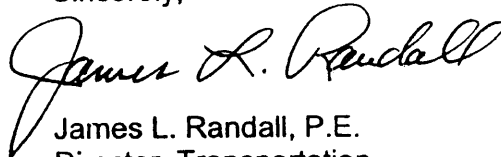
SGR states in their petition that the area of their planned quarry and railroad construction is mostly rural and composed of farmland and pastureland. The preferred route would cross a state roadway, FM 2676, as well as several county and local roads. TxDOT is concerned about the impact that an estimated four, one-hundred car trains crossing FM 2676 would have upon the safety of the local community and traveling public. Hondo Independent School District has three bus routes and Medina Valley Independent School District has one bus route that travels along FM 2676 and cross the preferred route twice daily. In addition, there is a large agricultural supply business at the eastern terminus of FM 2676, which provides significant quantities of fertilizer and insecticides to the surrounding area. FM 2676 is abutted by numerous working farms and ranches that utilize these materials on a daily basis. The combination of school children traveling along the route and the transportation of potentially hazardous materials present significant safety concerns at highway-rail grade crossings.

TxDOT's focus on transportation issues throughout the state is multimodal in nature and we appreciate the economic and efficiency benefits provided by the utilization of freight rail transportation. Texas ranks number one in the United States in total number of railroad track miles, second in number of freight railroads operating within the state, fifth in rail traffic transported within the state, and first in number of grade crossing fatalities. As you are aware, the Federal Railroad Administration is encouraging states

to reduce the number of at-grade crossings by consolidating crossings, closing crossings, and grade-separating crossings wherever possible. We are requesting that STB require SGR to construct a grade-separation at FM 2676 to eliminate all highway-rail grade crossing conflicts. We believe a grade-separation at this location would increase the safety of the traveling public, as well as improve the efficiency of the proposed rail operations and any future increase in operations along the route.

Please contact Mario Medina, Director, Multimodal Section, at (512) 416-2349, if you have any further questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James L. Randall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" and last name "Randall" clearly legible.

James L. Randall, P.E.
Director, Transportation
Planning and Programming

cc: Victoria Rutson, Surface Transportation Board
Wayne A. Dennis, P. E., Deputy Director, Transportation Planning and
Programming Division, TxDOT
Mario G. Medina, P.E., Transportation Planning and Programming Division,
TxDOT
Julie Brown, P.E., San Antonio District, TxDOT